GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:2756
ANSWERED ON:05.12.2007
ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION
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Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the level of environmental degradation is on the rise in the country;

(b) if so, the details thereof during the last three years;

(c) whether the large scale dependency on fossil fuel is a major cause of environmental degradation;

(d) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) the measures taken by the Government in this regard?

Answer

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI NAMO NARAIN MEENA)

(a) to (d): Environmental degradation is caused by rapid growth of population, industrial pollution, unplanned urbanization and unsustainable production and consumption patterns. Area under forest and tree cover, quality of water resources, air quality, etc; are some of the parameters for perceiving the level of environmental degradation. The State of Forest Report 2003 reveals that the forest cover in the country is 678,333 km2 and constitutes 20.64 per cent of its geographic area. A comparison with the forest cover assessment of 2001 reveals an overall increase of 2,795 km2 or 0.41 per cent in forest cover of the country. The Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) is monitoring air quality at 339 locations under the National Air Quality Monitoring Programme (NAMP). The monitored data reveals that the level of sulphur dioxide (SO_2) and nitrogen dioxide (NO_2) are within the prescribed air quality standards in residential areas of most of the cities. However, the levels of respirable suspended particulate matter (RSPM) exceed the prescribed norms. The Biochemical Oxygen Demand is considered as the pollution indicator for any river in the country. Out of total riverine length of approximately 45,000 kms in our country, CPCB study indicates that 14% of riverine length is severely polluted with biochemical oxygen demand (BOD) more than 6 mg/liter, 19% is moderately polluted with BOD 3-6 mg/liter, whereas rest of the riverine length of 67% is relatively clean with BOD less than 3 mg/liter. In order to improve the water quality of the rivers, the Ministry is implementing the National River Conservation Plan by providing assistance to the State Governments.

(e) The existing legal framework and policies, such as Air (Prevention & Control) Act 1980 & 1988, Water (Prevention & Control) Act 1974, Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972, and National Environmental Policy 2006, and various programmes of the Government address the concerns regarding environmental degradation.